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ABSTRACT

This paper presents information on using the Internet (electronic mail, listservs, world wide web sites, and gopher servers) to teach English in a transdisciplinary context by linking subjects thematically. The paper discusses how the Internet allows students to compose for a real reason and for a real audience. It also discusses listservs and presents addresses and brief descriptions of 12 listservs and 14 e-mail based projects, as well as a "netiquette" primer. The paper briefly describes the world wide web and lists 35 web sites. The paper also briefly describes the Gopher information delivery system and lists 11 gopher sites. (RS)

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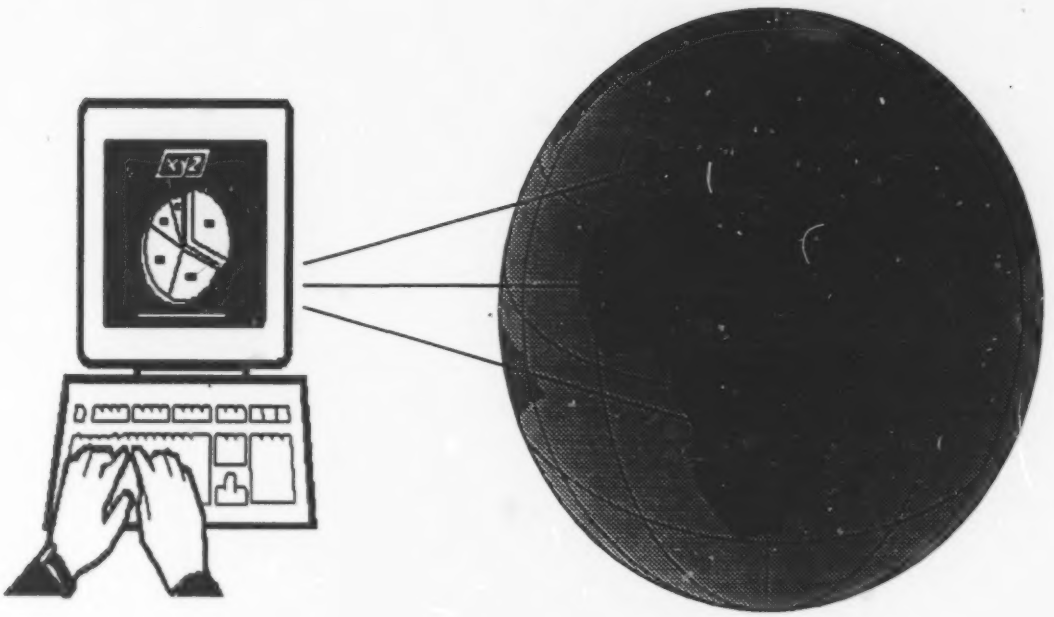

Cruisin' the Information Superhighway: Using the Internet to teach English in a Transdisciplinary Context

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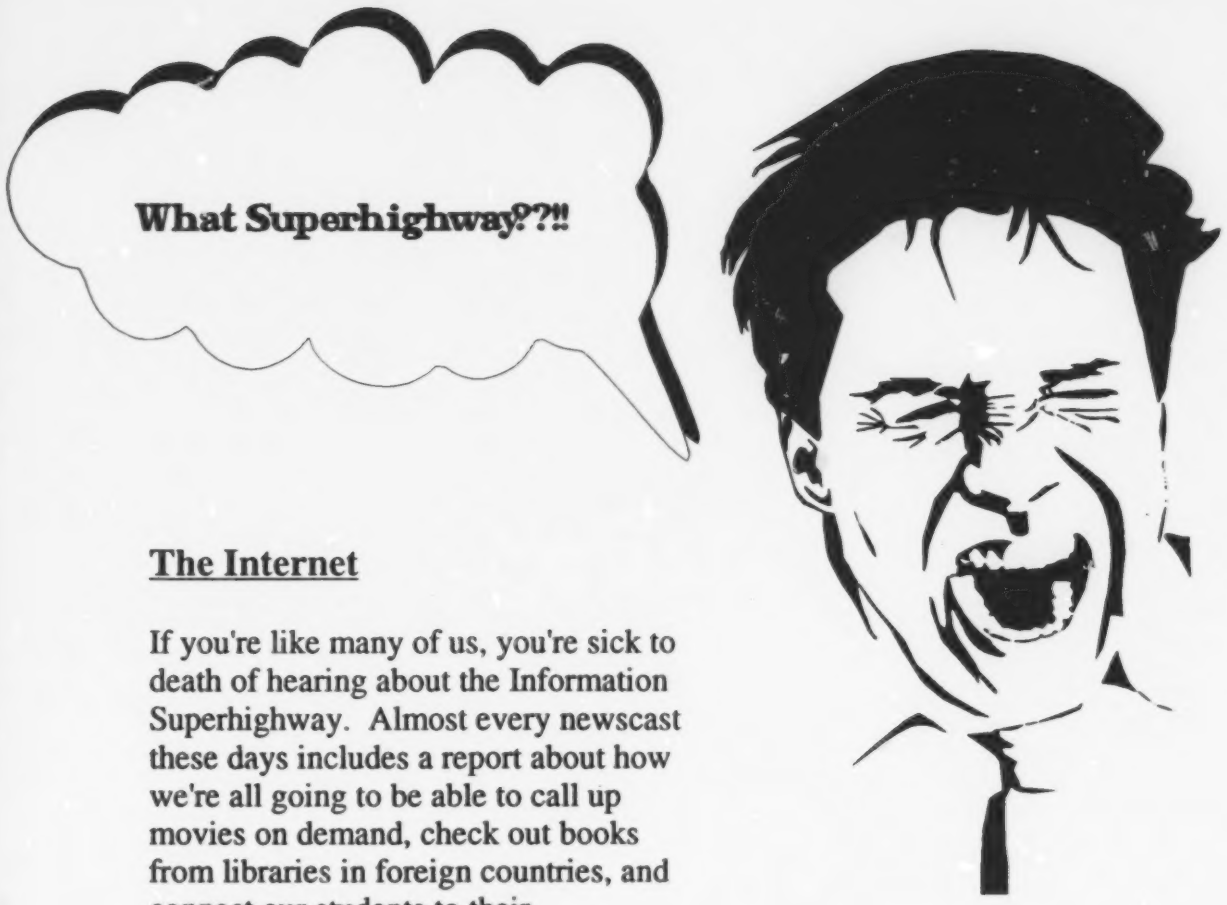

The Internet

If you're like many of us, you're sick to death of hearing about the Information Superhighway. Almost every newscast these days includes a report about how we're all going to be able to call up movies on demand, check out books from libraries in foreign countries, and connect our students to their counterparts across the country and the world. Let's forget what we ***will*** be able to do. Let's focus instead on what we ***can*** do today. All we need is a computer, a modem, a phone line, and a little imagination. We may not be in the fast lane, but we're definitely on the on-ramp. Fasten your seatbelts!

The Internet and the Transdisciplinary Curriculum

More and more schools are moving toward a transdisciplinary curriculum which attempts to link subjects thematically. We can easily see how the English curriculum can relate to, say, history or art. But how can we incorporate English into calculus? Or biology? Or, heaven forbid, statistics?

The Internet provides an answer. By connecting schools with the world, the Net allows students to see the links between subjects. For instance, literature students studying Brave New World can talk to medical students about possible connections between today's fertility experiments and the Bokanovsky Process. They can discuss with sociologists the connection between recreational drugs and soma. And, with the help of mathematicians, they can calculate population statistics to discover how many people will inhabit the earth in fifty years. Finally, they can publish electronically the results of their studies, sharing their findings with a real-world audience.

Perhaps the best news for English teachers is the Net's current emphasis on text. Students are judged not by their accent, their gender, their race, or their religion. They are judged only by their ability to manipulate text, to write. Using the Internet allows the student to compose for a real reason and for a real audience. The English teacher no longer has to say, "You *will* need to write in the real-world." Instead, she can say, "You *are* writing in the real world."

Net Resources

Listservs

Internet mailing lists, often called listservs, allow individuals with common interests to share their thoughts and discoveries. For example, if you're getting ready to teach Romeo and Juliet for the first time, you can ask other teachers for input on a list called, appropriately, *English-Teachers*. If your students want to collaborate on a project with students in other states, they can post their request on a list called *KidProj*. To subscribe to an Internet mailing list, all you need an active e-mail account.

Signing up

Subscribing to an Internet mailing list is easy. Once you know the address of the list you wish to join, compose an e-mail message notifying the management of the list, usually via a software program called Listserv. For example, to subscribe to *English-Teachers*, compose an e-mail message to:

listserv@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu.

Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type:

subscribe english-teachers your full name.

Now send the message. You will soon receive confirmation from the Listserv. Save this message. It includes important information about the list: how to sign off, how to change your mail settings, how to post.... It is polite to introduce yourself to the list once you have subscribed. When you open your e-mail, there will be messages for you from other participants on the list. **PLEASE NOTE**: Some listservs generate **LOTS** of mail. Be certain to clean your electronic mailbox out **DAILY**.

Other lists:

International E-Mail Classroom Connections: a listserv for k-12 teachers seeking partner classes for international and cross-cultural electronic mail exchanges. Send the message *subscribe iecc your name* to *iecc-request@stolaf.edu.*

Newedu-L: This list is dedicated to experimenting with exploring the way we educate. Send the message *subscribe newedu-l your name* to *listserv@vm.usc.edu.*

Ednet: For those interested in exploring the educational potential of the Internet. Great for finding ideas on using the Internet with your students. Send the message *subscribe ednet your name* to *listserv@nic.umass.edu.*

PresTO: Preservice Teachers Online. A list for student teachers. Send the message *subscribe presto your name* to *listproc@ra.msstate.edu.*

STARnet: Students At-Risk Network - brings together people, ideas, and information to cooperatively promote educational and support services for at-risk youth.
Send the message *subscribe starnet your name* to *listproc@services.dese.state.mo.us.*

KidLink: a listserv service that runs the yearly KIDS projects. Subscribe to find out about KidLink projects. Send the message *subscribe kidlink your name* to *listserv@vm1.nodak.edu.*

KidCafe: a world-wide KidLink discussion group for 10 - 15 year old kids. Read-only for people outside this age group. Send the message *subscribe kidcafe your name* to *listserv@vm1.nodak.edu.*

KidProj: a KidLink service that enables teachers/youth group leaders to provide projects for children in the 10-15 age range, promoting curriculum exchange. New class projects are regularly announced. Send the message *subscribe kidproj your name* to *listserv@vm1.nodak.edu.*

KidSphere: a global listserv for use by teachers and administrators, focusing on issues and resources for students in grades k-12. Send the message *subscribe kidsphere your name* to *kidsphere-request@vms.pitt.edu.*

AppliedCom: a listserv for teachers and administrators in Applied Communications. Send the message *subscribe appliedcom your name* to *listproc@listproc.bgsu.edu.*

Classroom Connect: a discussion group focusing on classroom applications of the Internet. Send the message *subscribe crc your e-mail address* to *info@wentworth.com.*

Inclass: Sponsored by Canada's SchoolNet Project, Inclass offers information about using the Net in the classroom from a Canadian point of view. Features plenty of resource pointers. Send the message *subscribe inclass your name* to *listproc@schoolnet.carleton.ca.*

E-mail based projects

(From the February, 1995 issue of *Classroom Connect.* $47/year - includes *How to Get Connected to the Internet: Facts and Funding* and *Educator's Online Resources Guide.* E-mail *connect@wentworth.com* or call 1.800.638.1639 for more information.)

1996 Olympic Literary Exhibit: Young authors can send their original literary work to Clarke Middle School, Athens, GA, for a Multicultural Literary Exhibition held when Olympic soccer and volleyball come to Athens in 1996.
E-mail to: *spiazza@moe.coe.uga.edu.*

KidLink Computer Art Exhibition: Students can submit their computer-generated art for the 1995 exhibit of kid-generated computer art in Stockholm, Sweden. Tutorials helping kids learn to use paint programs and a few examples of submitted creations are available online.
E-mail to: *bot@botfri.se.*

Electronic Emissary: Subject matter experts and students explore curriculum-related topics via e-mail in this project by Judi Harris at the University of Texas.
E-mail to: *jbharris@tenet.edu.* (You may also wish to check out Judi's book *The Way of the Ferret: Finding Educational Resources on the Net.* E-mail to *iste@oregon.uoregon.edu* for more information).

Technology club for girls: Fifth and sixth grade girls in Brooklyn Park, MN have formed an after-school technology club for girls.
E-mail to: *0279bgel@informns.k12.mn.us.*

Indigenous history swap: An Aboriginal Perspectives class has researched the customs of Australian Aboriginal people. They'd like to compare details with other cultural groups in the areas of spiritual beliefs, art, food, clothing, and many others.
E-mail to: *ann.collaery@telopea.act.edu.au.*

Spring migration study: Students can track animal migration and the arrival of Spring around the world through the Journey North project. Classes around the world will exchange observations and data and species will be tracked by satellite. Runs through June 1.
E-mail to: *jnorth@jriver.com*.

Teen newsletter: Nathan Straus Middle School in lower eastside Manhattan invites classes to share their concerns with their students.
E-mail to: *dinas@rdz.stjohns.edu*.

Italians learning English: Nine and ten year olds in a primary school in Italy want to practice their English.
E-mail to: *sestri@saxophone.itd.ge.cnr.it*.

Laotian and Thai students: A high school in Mt. Lake, MN has a large population of Laotian and Thai students willing to talk to others about their culture.
E-mail to: *0173mlps@informns.k12.mn.us*.

MayaQuest - Interactive Expedition: MayaQuest takes students to the rainforests of Central America with adventure journalist and cyclist Dan Buettner and several archeologists. Their quest: To find out why one of the Western Hemisphere's greatest peoples collapsed in the ninth century. Classes can go online to link up with the expedition and learn about this ancient civilization. Available through Classroom Prodigy. Educators without Prodigy can use the Internet to access expedition updates and graphics.
E-mail to *mayaquest@mecc.com*.

Ask Dr. Math: Administered by students and profs at Swarthmore College.
E-mail to: dr.math@forum.swarthmore.edu

Ask Prof. Math: For students and teachers in grades k-9.
Email to: maths@sbu.edu.

Ask a Scientist: Fields student questions on a wide range of subjects, including astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics and earth science. Students from the Advanced Placement Chemistry Class at Christianburg High School in Virginia will research the topic and formulate replies within 48 hours. Questions are limited to five per e-mail.
E-mail to: apscichs@radford.vak12ed.edu

A Netiquette Primer

1. Never, never, never give out private information (your password, your address, your phone number, your social security number) to strangers on the Net.

2. Don't type messages in all caps. It is considered the same as shouting.

3. It is difficult to read humor in a message. If you don't want to offend anyone, indicate your feelings with a wink and a smile: ;-)
Other "smileys" include: :-) :-(

4. Always include your userid and e-mail address when you post an e-mail message.

5. Don't use the exotic features of your terminal (bold, italics) in e-mail. These frequently send a string of control characters that wreak havoc on some types of terminals.

6. Resist flaming. A "flame" is a virulent and (often) personal attack against the author of a posting. Flames are, unfortunately, common. People who frequently write flames are known as "flamers." A drawn-out episode of flaming is known as a "flame war."

7. Keep your signature file under six lines long.

8. Familiarize yourself with basic NetSpeak: e.g., BTW stands for "By The Way"; FAQ stands for a frequently asked question or a list of frequently asked questions and their answers; IMHO stands for "In My Humble Opinion"; WTG stands for "Way To Go"; a "newbie" is a new user; and ROTFL stands for "Rolling On The Floor Laughing".

9. Don't post advertisements on listservs or bulletin board services.

10. Monitor the Internet use of children. Like it or not, the free exchange of information on the Net includes information that may not be suitable for children.

The World Wide Web

The World Wide Web (WWW or W3) provides Internet access using a graphical interface (photos, video, sound) which features links to other sources of information.

Accessing the WWW requires a Serial Line Internet Protocol (SLIP) or Point to Point (PPP) Internet connection. Both allow a computer to connect to the Net using a modem and telephone line. Users can explore using navigation software (like Mosaic or NetScape) on their own computer in contrast to a Dialup Internet Connection, where a user must navigate using a text-based set of menus. A SLIP or PPP connection may be obtained from a local university or private company, or from an Internet Service Provider (ISP). ISPs also offer technical assistance to schools that want to become Internet sites and place their information online. (A list of ISPs can be retrieved via ftp at ftp.wentworth.com. Look in the wentworth subdirectory.)

Some good web sites

Center for Teaching and Learning at Duke: http://www.ctl.duke.edu

K-12 Resources: http://www.itcs.com/itcs/k12res.html

K-12 Personal Pages: http://www.utexas.edu/world/personal/index.html

Old Dominion University: http://www.odu.edu

Rutgers: http://www.rutgers.edu

University of North Carolina: http://www.unc.edu

The Internet Mall: http://www.mecklerweb.com/imall

PC Magazine: http://zcias3.ziff.com/%7Epcmag

The Whole Internet Catalog: http://nearnet.gnn.com/wic/newrescat.toc.html

Ziff-Davis Publishing: http://www.ziff.com

Tour of the Internet: http://www.kei.com/internet-tour.html

Star Trek: http://gagme.wwa.com/~boba/trek.html

Columbia University: http://www.columbia.edu

English Server: http://english-server.hss.cmv.edu

The English Home Page at Virginia Tech:
http://athena.english.vt.edu/favorite.html

Other English-related servers:

http://alfred1.u.washington.edu:8080/~dillon/phonresources.html

http://www.willamette.edu/~tjones/languages.www_virtual_library_language.html

http://sunsite.unc.edu/cisco.edu-arch.html

http://www.ed.gov/ed/index.html

http://www.teleport.com/~vincer/starter.html

Teaching American Literature:
http://www.georgetown.edu/tamlit/tamlit-home.html

English writing and language use: http://syndicate.com

The Vocal Point: produced by k-12 students in the Boulder Valley School District in Colorado. http://bvsd.k12.co.us/cent/Newspaper/Newspaper.html

The Junior Seahawk Newsletter: collection of stories, poems, and articles by students at Arbor Heights Elementary School in Seattle.
http://www.halcyon.com/arborhts/jrseahaw.html

Theodore Tugboat: on online activity center for students in grades k-4.
http://www.cochran.edu

Internet Statistics: The Clearinghouse for Networked Information Discovery and Retrieval (CNIDR) has compiled an array of stats concerning Internet use by k-12 schools. Provides great ammo for educators trying to convince their districts to bring the Net into the classroom.
http://k12.cnidr.org/janice_k12/states/summary.html.

Children's books: For children 3-8.
http://www.digimark.net/iatech/books.

Wentworth Communications: Publishers of Classroom Connect. Web site provides links to lots of education sites.
http://www.wentworth.com

Reinventing Government: Access U.S. National Performance Review documents and Al Gore's Electronic Open Meeting. Offer suggestions for improvements in the federal government.
http://www.npr.gov

The Paleontology Server: The University of California's online Museum of Paleontology is an interactive natural history museum.
http://ucmp1.berkeley.edu

Academy One: Features lists of ongoing online projects.
http://nptn.org/homepages/linda

History of the British Isles: Includes in-depth accounts of the Irish and Celtic cultures.
http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/subjects/british_isles.html

Learn Japanese: Teaches students new to the Japanese language simple words and phrases:
http://www.ntt.jp/japan/japanese

Malaysia Online: http://mimos.my

South Africa Tour: Learn about South Africa via ar interactive travel map, links to facts and figures, cultural documents, and more.
http://osprey.unisa.ac.za/O/docs/south-africa.html

Gopher It!

The Internet Gopher allows you to browse for resources on the Net using a hierarchy of menus. In short, Gopher is an information delivery system that searches for, retrieves, and displays requested information from remote servers on the Internet. All gophers are interconnected, hence the phrase "gopherspace." The gopher to which you first connect only determines the first menu you see. Once you have connected to a gopher server, you may search for other directories all over the world.

Some good gophers --

Duke University: gopher.duke.edu. Login: gopher; password: gopher.
Florida State University: gopher.fsu.edu. Login: gopher: password: gopher.
University of Pennsylvania: gopher.upenn.edu. No login or password required.
University Of Maryland: inform.umd.edu. Type gopher at first request for terminal prompt.

Once connected to a gopher server, you can search for these English and education-related gophers:

una.hh.lib.umich.edu
cosn.org (port 70) -- The Consortium for School Networking
kids.duq.edu (port 70) -- KIDS gopher
nysernet.org (port 70) login: empire (no password)--The Empire Internet Schoolhouse
jerusalem1.dataserv.co.il -- Holocaust Archives
cwis.usc.edu -- gopher jewels
liberty.uc.wlu.edu -- new Internet sites (gopher, telnet, and WWW)
schoolnet.carleton.ca -- lesson plans
ericir.syr.edu -- lesson plans
bigcat.missouri.edu -- lesson plans
ec.sdcs.k12.ca.us -- lesson plans